

The Book of Isaiah,

Author: Isaiah

Date: About 700-690 e.c. '

Theme: Salvation

Key Ideas: Judgment of Sin. Messianic Promise,

Key Words: Salvation, Redeemer, Righteousness, Peace, Comfort.

Author The first verse of this book names its author as Isaiah, the son of Amos. The name "Isaiah" means "Yahweh Is Salvation." The vision and prophecy are claimed four times by Isaiah: his name is mentioned an additional twelve times in the book. His name also occurs twelve times in 2 Kings and four times in 2 Chronicles. The Book of Isaiah is directly quoted twenty-one times in the New Testament and attributed in each case to the prophet Isaiah. Some scholars who have difficulty with detailed prophetic prediction of future events have denied to Isaiah the authorship of chapters 44-66. They term this section Second Isaiah and insist that since these chapters deal with events that took place long after Isaiah's day, such as the Babylonian captivity of Judah, the return from Exile, and the rise of Cyrus, the Persian ruler who mandated the return from Exile (45:1), they were written later and attached to Isaiah.

If divine inspiration of Scripture and the possibility of the supernatural are accepted, however, one should have no difficulty within the unity of authorship of Isaiah. After all, Isaiah and other prophets of his time prophesied events in the life of Jesus that happened seven hundred years later. Furthermore, critics overlook the fact that Isaiah had access to the Book of Deuteronomy, which predicted both a captivity and a return from exile (Deut. 29; 30). If the mention of Cyrus (49:8; 45:1) is a stumbling block, what about Bethlehem, Jesus' birthplace named and predicted by Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah (Mic. 5:2)?

Other arguments favor single authorship: 1) key words and phrases are equally distributed throughout Isaiah; 2) references to landscape and local coloring are also uniform. The greater beauty in style of Hebrew poetry in the latter chapters of Isaiah can be explained by the change in subject matter from judgment and entreaty to comfort and assurance. In any case, as clearly likely as is that Isaiah was written via one penman, contending for this position is not intended to impugn the sincerity of any with contrary opinion.

Date The prophet states that he prophesied during the reigns of "Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (1:1). Some place his call to the prophetic office as being in the year that King Uzziah died, which was about 740 B.C. (6:1, 8). It is likely, however, that he began during the last decade of Uzziah's reign. Since Isaiah mentions the death of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, who died about 680 b.c. (37:37, 38), he must have outlived Hezekiah by a few years.

Tradition has it that Isaiah was martyred during the reign of Manasseh, Hezekiah's son. Many believe that the clause "sawn in two" in Hebrews 11:37 is a reference to Isaiah's death. The first part of the book may have been written in Isaiah's earlier years, the latter chapters after his retirement from public life.

If Isaiah began prophesying about 750 b.c., his ministry may have briefly overlapped those of Amos and Hosea in Israel, as well as that of Micah in Judah.

Background Isaiah prophesied at the most crucial period in the history of Judah and Israel. Both the southern and northern kingdoms had experienced nearly a half-century of increasing prosperity and power. Israel, ruled by Jeroboam and six other minor kings, had succumbed to pagan worship. Judah, under Uzziah, Jotham, and Nezekiah, had maintained an outward conformity to orthodoxy, but had gradually fallen into serious moral and spiritual decline (3:8-26). Secret places of pagan worship were tolerated: the wealthy oppressed the poor: the women neglected their families in the quest of carnal pleasure: many of the priests and prophets became drunken men-pleasers (5:7-12.18-23: 22:12-14). While there would come one more revival in Judah under King Josiah (640-609 B.C.), it was clear to Isaiah that the covenant recorded by Moses in Deuteronomy 30:11-20 had been so completely violated that judgment and captivity were inevitable for Judah, even as it was for Israel.

Isaiah entered his ministry at about the time of the founding of Rome and the first Olympic games of the Greeks. European powers were not quite ready for wide conquest, but several Asian powers were looking beyond their borders. Assyria particularly was poised for conquest to the south and to the west. The prophet, a student of world affairs, could see the conflict that was imminent. Assyria took Samaria in 721 b.c.

Purpose One of Isaiah's purposes was to declare God's displeasure with and judgment upon sin in Judah and Israel and the surrounding nations. Almost all the Hebrew words for sin are employed by the prophet. A parallel purpose was to endeavor to turn God's people away from disobedience in order to avert disaster, a purpose that was only partially successful. Perhaps the greatest purpose, however, was to lay a foundation of hope and promise for the faithful remnant of God's people. Thus the book is full of promises of restoration and redemption of the certain advent of the Messiah, of salvation for all the nations and of the triumph of God's purposes in spite of intervals of suffering.

PERSONAL APPLICATION No Old Testament book, with the possible exception of the Psalms speaks more powerfully and appropriately to the modern-day church than the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah has been called both the "messianic prophet" and the "evangelical prophet." He prophesied for all future ages, predicting both the first and second advents of Christ. His very name means "Salvation," a salvation not only for those of his day, but also a salvation of the peoples of the nations for all time. This salvation issues from a Savior or Redeemer who has provided a ransom; it is always a vicarious salvation by grace.

The prophetic time frame of Isaiah will not close until the Son of David rules over His kingdom of peace (2:1-5; 11:1-9; 42:1-4, 61:1-11; 65:17-25; 66:22, 23).

Isaiah speaks as powerfully to our day as he did to the society of his day. He focused a spotlight of holiness upon the sordid sins of Israel; he summoned his contemporaries to cease from their social injustice, their quest for carnal indulgence, their trust in the arm of flesh, and their hypocritical pretense of orthodox religion. He also warned of the consequences of judgment if sin continued.

Christ Revealed After His resurrection Jesus walked with two of His disciples and "expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). To do so He must have drawn heavily from the Book of Isaiah, because seventeen chapters of Isaiah contain prophetic references to Christ.

Christ is spoken of as the "Lord," "Branch of the Lord," "Immanuel," "Wonderful, Counselor," "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father" , "Prince of Peace,"

"Rod of Jesse," "Cornerstone." "King," "Shepherd." "Servant of Yahweh," "Elect One." "Lamb of God," "Leader and Commander," "Redeemer`" and "Anointed One."

Chapter 53 is the greatest single Old Testament chapter prophesying the Messiah's atoning work. No text in either Testament more completely sets forth the purpose of Christ's vicarious death on the Cross than this chapter. It is directly quoted nine or ten times by New Testament writers: 52:15 (Rom. 15:21); 5.3:1 (John 12:38 · Rom. 10:16); 53:4 (Matt. 8:17); 53:5 (Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:24); 53:7, 8 (Acts 8:32. 33); 53:9 (1 Pet. 2:22); 53:10 (1 Cor. 15:3, 4); 53:12 (Luke 22:31). There are also much New Testament fulfillment of details in chapter 53 in addition to the direct quotations.

Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit is mentioned specifically fifteen times in the Book of Isaiah, not counting references to the Spirit's power, effect, or influence without mention of His name. There are three general categories under which the work of the Holy Spirit may be described:

1. The Spirit's anointing upon the Messiah to empower Him for His rule and administration as King on the throne of David (Is.1:1-12); as the suffering Servant of the Lord who will heal, liberate, enlighten, and bring justice to the nations (49:1-9); as the Anointed One (Messiah) in both His advents (61:1-3; Luke 4:17-21).

2. The Spirit's outpouring upon Israel to give them success in their rehabilitation after the pattern of the Exodus (44:1-5; 63:1-5). to protect them from their enemies (59:19), and to preserve Israel in covenant relationship with Yahweh (59:21). However, Israel must be careful not to rebel and grieve the Holy Spirit (6:3:10; Eph. 4:30).

3. The Spirit's operation at Creation and in the preservation of nature (40:13; see also 48:16). The Lord Jesus, whose earthly ministry was carried out in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit, as Isaiah has prophesied, promised to pour out His Spirit upon the church to empower it for ministry in the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

I. Prophecy of denunciation and invitation (Part One)	1:1-35:10
A. Messages of judgment and promise	1:1-6:13
1. An indictment of rebellion, call to repent	1:1-31
2. Future glory. Punishment for perversion	2:1-4:1
3. Branch of the Lord	4:2-6
4. Song of the vineyard, and assorted woes	5:1-30
5. The prophet, his vision, and call	6:1-13
B. Messages concerning Immanuel	7:1-12:6
1. Invasion against Ahaz, Yahweh's sign: a Child's birth	7:1-25
2. Assyria, the Lord's instrument	8:1-22
3. A great light. God's Wonderful Child	9:1-8
4. God's judgment upon Israel and Assyria	9:8-10:19
5. The remnant of Jacob. Branch of Jesse	10:20-11:16
6. Songs of praise to the Lord	12:1-6
C. Messages of judgment upon the nations	13:1-24:2:3
D. Messages of judgment, praise, promise	25:1-27:1:□
1. The Lord's deliverance, the kingdom age	25:1-12
2. The Rock of Ages and the resurrection	26:1-21
3. Doom of oppressors. Israel restored	27:1-13
E. Woes to unbelievers and immoral in Israel	28:1-33:24
1. Woe to drunkards and scoffers	28:1-29
2. Woe to hypocrites in Zion	29:1-24
3. Woes to those who trust in Egypt	30:1-:31:9

4. About the coming King and His reign of peace, mingled with assorted woes	32:1-33:24
F. Summary	34:1-35:10
1. Judgments upon ungodly nations	34:1-17
2. Joy and blessing to God's people	35:1-10
God's dealing with Hezekiah	36:1-39:8
A. God's deliverance of Judah	36:1-37:38
B. God's healing of Hezekiah	38:1-22
C. God's censure of Hezekiah	39:1-8
Prophecy of comfort and peace (Part Two)	40:1--66:24
A. The assurance of comfort and peace	40:1-48:22
1. The greatness of Yahweh the Comforter	40:1-31
2. His challenge to the nations and Israel	41:1-29
3. Yahweh's servants: Christ and Israel	42:1-25
4. Yahweh's gracious redemption	43:1-44:5
5. Yahweh's indictment of idolatry	44:6-23
6. Yahweh's using Cyrus as a deliverer	44:24-45:25
i. Yahweh and idols contrasted	46:1-13
8. Yahweh's judgment upon Babylon	47:1-15
9. Yahweh's rebuke to Israel followed by promise	48:1-22
B. The Lord's Servant, the Author of comfort and peace	49:1-57
1. The Servant's restoration of Israel and light to the nations	49:1-57:21
2. The disobedience of Israel and the obedience of the Servant	50:1-11
3. Yahweh's remnant encouraged to listen	51:1-52:12
4. The Servant's triumph through vicarious suffering	52:1-3-53:12
5. The resulting restoration of Israel	54:1-17
6. God's grace and peace toward repentant sinners	55:1-56:8
7. The rebuke of false leaders and idolatrous backsliders	56:9-57:21
C. The realization of comfort and peace	58:1-66:24
1. False and true worship	58:1-14
2. Israel's sin and God's redeemer	59:1-21
3. The well-being and peace of the redeemed	60:1-22
4. The spirit anointed redeemer who brings peace	61:1-62:12
5. God's vengeance & Israel's prayer of deliverance	63:1-64:12
6. God's answer to prayer; Israel's future hope	65:1-66:24